

Collaboration. Problem Solving. Creating Positive Action Plans.

Positive Difference PD

www.maryfowler.com

Why we collaborate and problem solve to fulfill “unmet needs.”

- Helps us to see the causes (of behavioral challenges) rather than judge the effects. (Judgments are the fuel for reactions.)
- Explains what the student gets, avoids, or escapes w maladaptive behavior. (This information leads to the heart of the unsolved problem.)
- Provides information that can be *acted upon not reacted to*.
- **Actively engages the student(s) as an equal partner in identifying and solving the problem.**
- **Builds self-regulation and “response-ability.”**

Benefits to Students & Staff:

- Learn a calmer, reasonable, and more effective way to deal w chronic issues.
- Gain practice in taking another’s perspective and build a mutually helpful relationship.
- Work on mutual goals together—establishes connection, belonging, and motivation.
- Reduces frustration.
- Builds a helping relationship.

Using the plan:

1. ID the student’s concerns FIRST. SEEK to **Understand and Listen**, NOT to be heard.
2. ID your concerns (only after the student has fully expressed theirs. The idea is not to get into conflict but to get to problem solving ground.)
3. Mutually create and agree upon a solution.
(*from the model developed by Ablon and Greene)

When you meet:

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Identify “actionable” information.
- B. Mutually agree upon concerns.
- C. Develop an action plan to address the issues.

D. Implement the plan and assess the effect.

The Process to Identify Unmet Needs and Develop Appropriate Strategies:

1. NOTICE AND NAME: Practice objective, blameless observation.

- Begin with the issue you've noticed or that led to the conference: State it briefly using non-judgmental words as an opener.

2. EMPATHIZE. FOCUS ON THE STUDENT'S CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE NOTICED BEFORE YOURS.

- (This step is not about "enforcing" the rules, coercing the student to admit wrongdoing, or taking "disciplinary" action. It is about giving the student a voice to openly identify unmet needs.)
- Ask the student to elaborate on his or her concerns or perceptions. Listen deeply and reflectively. You want to achieve the clearest understanding of the child's perspective. The conversation is not what you want them to talk about, but what the child has to say. Gently steer the focus. Avoid any inclination to lecture, blame, fault find, or judge.
- Expect that some children may need time before they respond and others may not talk at all. (Don't assume not talking means not taking responsibility. Some children may need to be convinced that you're invested in making sure their concerns matter. Some may not trust that you want to work with them. Some may be well-trained to talk the "party" line. Some may not have the words.) If the child doesn't want to talk, reassure the student that you're there to help and schedule a time to meet again.
- Once the child has expressed their concerns, express yours without making their concern "less important" than your concern.

3. DEFINE THE PROBLEM.

- Use what the student tells you as a starting point. Express empathy for the student's plight (not the behavior) and continue the conversation around the student's concerns. Perhaps you will need to ask more questions or express some other observations you've made until the problem can be clearly defined. Often the student's main concern may not be discovered until the middle of the conversation (or later). After you've established the student's concern, bring up your concerns about the situation. Put the combined information into "actionable information"—a problem that can be solved.

- State or write the problem down in the clearest, non-judgmental terms possible. Remember the words “actionable information.” (Greene)

4. INVITE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

- Ask the child to think of possible solutions. (Resist the temptation to take control and make the suggestions that you think will solve the problem.) Children often have a very good idea of what help they need to solve their problems. The purpose of this step is to enroll the child as the primary architect for solving the problem. The adult role is to guide and assist with logistics. For instance, if a child says, “I know I’m supposed to keep my hands to myself but sometimes I can’t stop myself,” then you might suggest a silent signal or a cue or an alternative action such as going on an errand.

IMPLEMENT, MONITOR, EVALUATE, REDESIGN (if needed)

Every solution needs to be implemented in a step by step manner. Its use needs to be monitored. Its effect on addressing the cause of the problem and solving the problem needs to be evaluated. Sometimes the student will need to be prompted to use the solution and congratulated when he or she does use it. Sometimes, the solution needs to be redesigned to be more effective.

Remember, collaborative problem solving for social, emotional, and behavioral performance is a *process*. Processes require on-going input and generally take time before the desired effect is realized.

TIPS for Success:

- Prioritize the problems— work on 1 or 2 problems @ a time.
- Be willing to set some problems aside while working on others.
- Conference in private whenever possible.
- Avoid having a “group” of adults meet with the child in the conference.

POSITIVE ACTION PLANNER CHECKLIST

KISS (keep it simple and safe)

CROSS THE SWAMP, DON'T WRESTLE W ALLIGATORS

- ☐ Meet w student
- ☐ Empathy—deeply listened to the student about his or her concerns, problems, etc.
- ☐ Define the Problem
 - Folded your concerns into the student's concerns.
 - Identify “actionable” information
 - Focus on one problem at a time
- ☐ Invite the student to think of possible solutions.
 - Student's ideas first
 - Troubleshoot unrealistic solutions
 - Develop needed supports for suggested solutions: cues, timers, peer buddy, choice on assignments, etc...
 - Who does what, when, where, how, and how often
- ☐ Implement the solution
- ☐ Monitor its use
- ☐ Is it working?
- ☐ Does something else need to be done for this problem?
- ☐ **Results?**